

Observing Behaviors in Dog Parks for Better Stormwater Education

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Background

- High levels of *E. coli* were found in stormwater runoff at Two Rivers Park in Nashville, TN
 - Park is approximately 5 Acres with a lot of green space, a walking trail, and shelter.
 - Little green space outside of the park leading to the nearest stream



Research Questions

- Do owners scoop the poop at the dog park?
- Do barriers exist at the dog park to prevent owners from scooping the dog pop?
- Why aren't people picking up the dog poop in the dog park?
- What educational messages are appropriate to the observed behavior to increase scooping behavior at the dog park?



Do owners scoop the poop at the dog park?



Why aren't people picking up poo?- Observing Behaviors

- Unstructured observations
 - 10 minutes, 3 locations throughout the park
 - Observed dog and owner behaviors
- Structured observations
 - Use of ethograms to log behaviors of both dogs and owners
 - Used same 3 locations, 20 minutes each for 2 days



Why aren't people picking up poo?- Hypothesis

- People are not paying attention to their dogs in the dog park.
- People are not paying attention because they are looking at their phone or socializing/talking with others.
- People do not scoop when they see their dog poop.



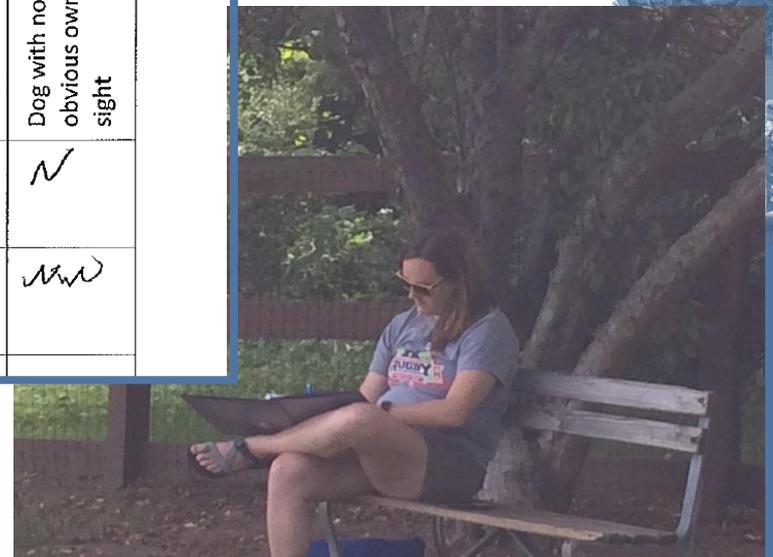
Observing Behaviors- Methods

- An ethogram was created using our hypothesis and observed data from unstructured observations.

Dog Park Structured Observations – Two Rivers Dog Park
 (20 minutes/location; +/- marks for behaviors observed for each person; repeat people as time allows)

DATE: 5/20 LOCATION: Bywoods

Time	Owner description	Owner observing dog	Dog is in owner's direct sight line	Person looking at phone/reading	Person talking to other people	Owner scooping behavior (scooping, has full bag, going to trash can, etc.)	Dog pooping	Dog peeing	Dog with no obvious owner in sight
10:00	Gray shirt	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
	Red shirt	Y	Y	N	N	N	NW	NW	NW



Observing Behaviors- Results

- Hypothesis: People are not paying attention to their dogs in the dog park.
 - In 74% of the observations of people, people were paying attention to their dogs.
 - In 80% of the observations of people and dogs, the dogs were in the assumed owner's line of sight.
 - In 7% of the observations of dogs, a dog was seen without an obvious owner in sight.



Observing Behaviors- Results

- Hypothesis: People are not paying attention because they are looking at their phone or socializing/talking with others.
 - In 85% of the observations of people, people were not looking at their phone.
 - In 71% of the observations of people, people were not talking to others.



Observing Behaviors- Results

- Hypothesis: People do not scoop when they see their dog poop.
 - In 6% of the incidents, where dogs were observed pooping, the owner was not observed scooping the poop (16 incidents, 1 non-scooping). The non-scooping owner's dog was not in the owner's line of sight; the owner was walking in the opposite direction of the dog and the dog was pooping in the tree line.



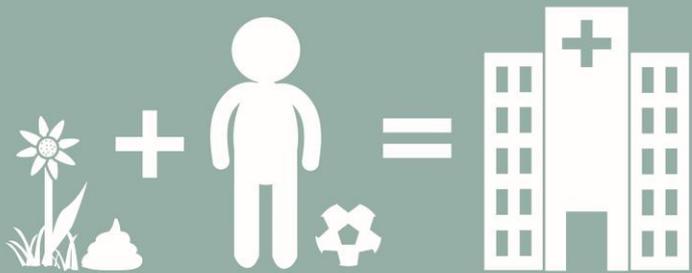
Creating an Education Event

- Created 2 different messages based on observations
 - “If you don’t see it, you can’t scoop it”
 - Dog poop facts
- Developed a survey to gauge citizens willingness to scoop poop and why they scoop
- Designed interactive medias to engage dog park patrons



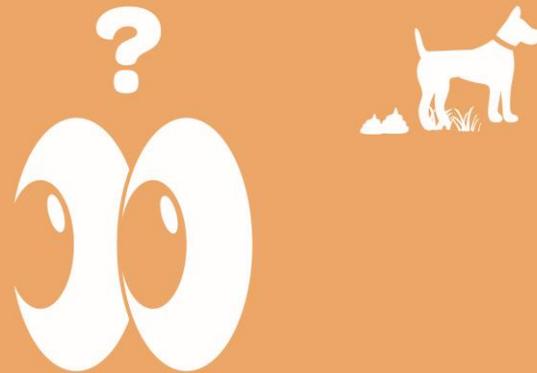
Messages

DOG WASTE IS NOT A FERTILIZER



Using dog poop as fertilizer leads to retinal diseases in children. In a pediatric hospital, 37% of all the retinal diseases of children's eyes were positive for worm eggs from dog waste.

IT ONLY TAKES SECONDS FOR A DOG TO GO

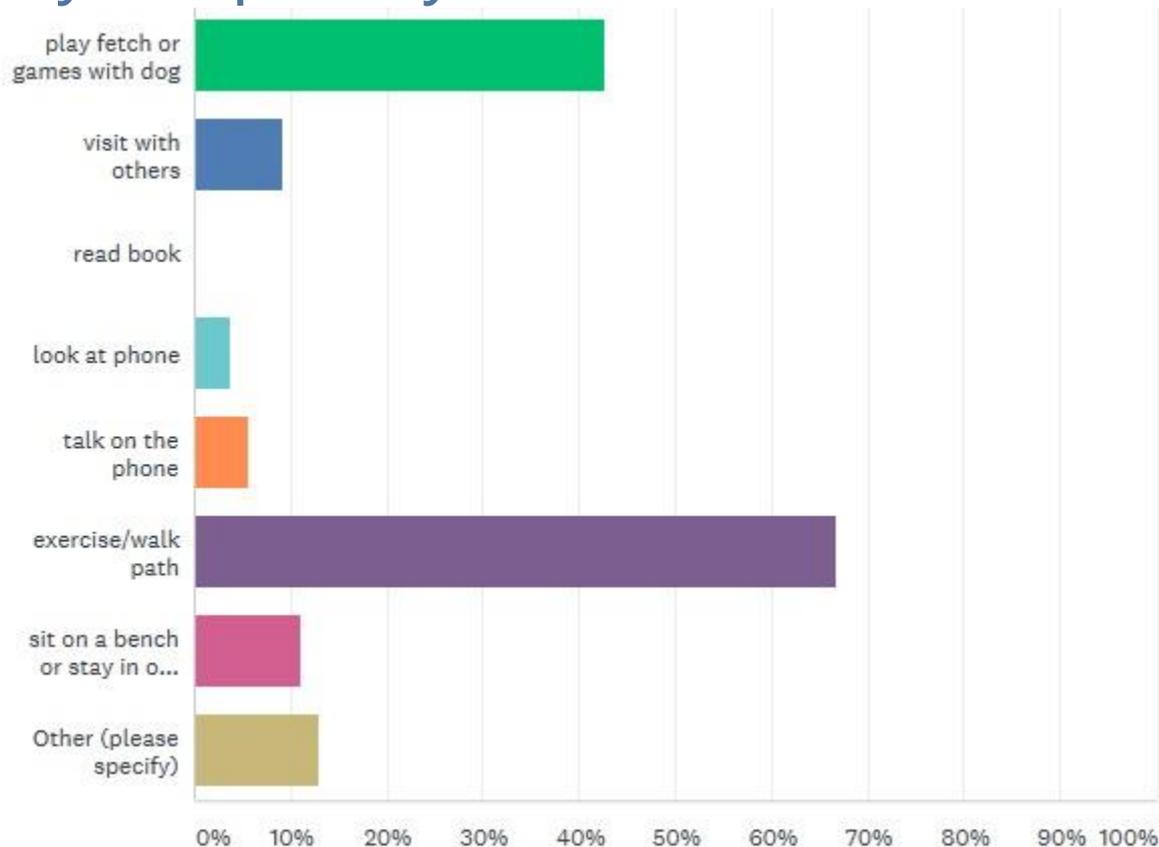


*If you don't see it,
you can't scoop it.*



Education Event- Survey Results

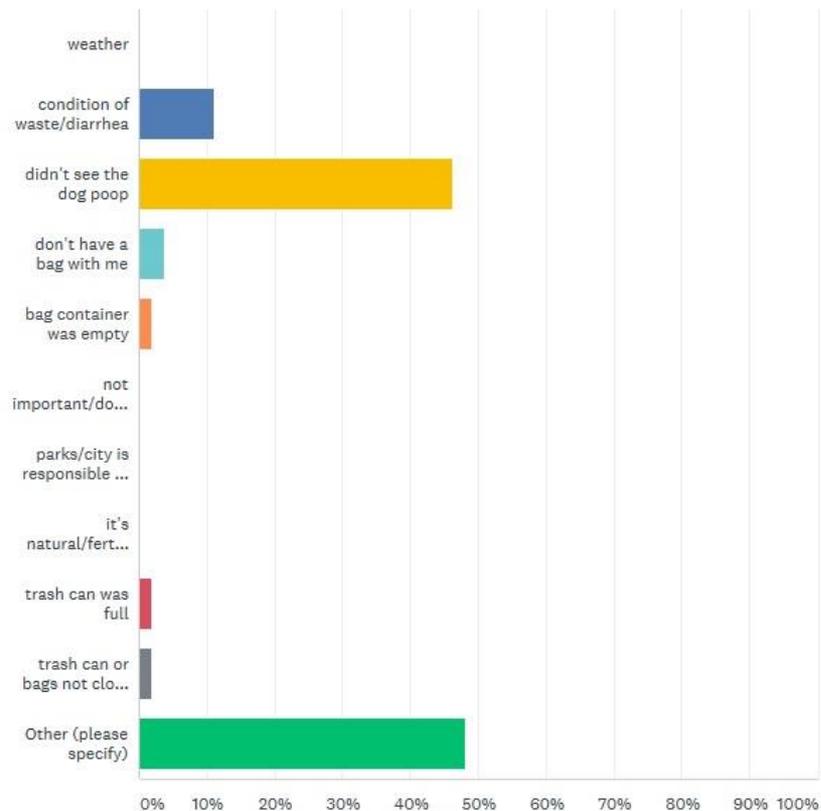
- Q1) When you visit a dog park, how do you spend your time?



Education Event- Survey Results

- Q2) While at a dog park, what would cause you to not scoop your

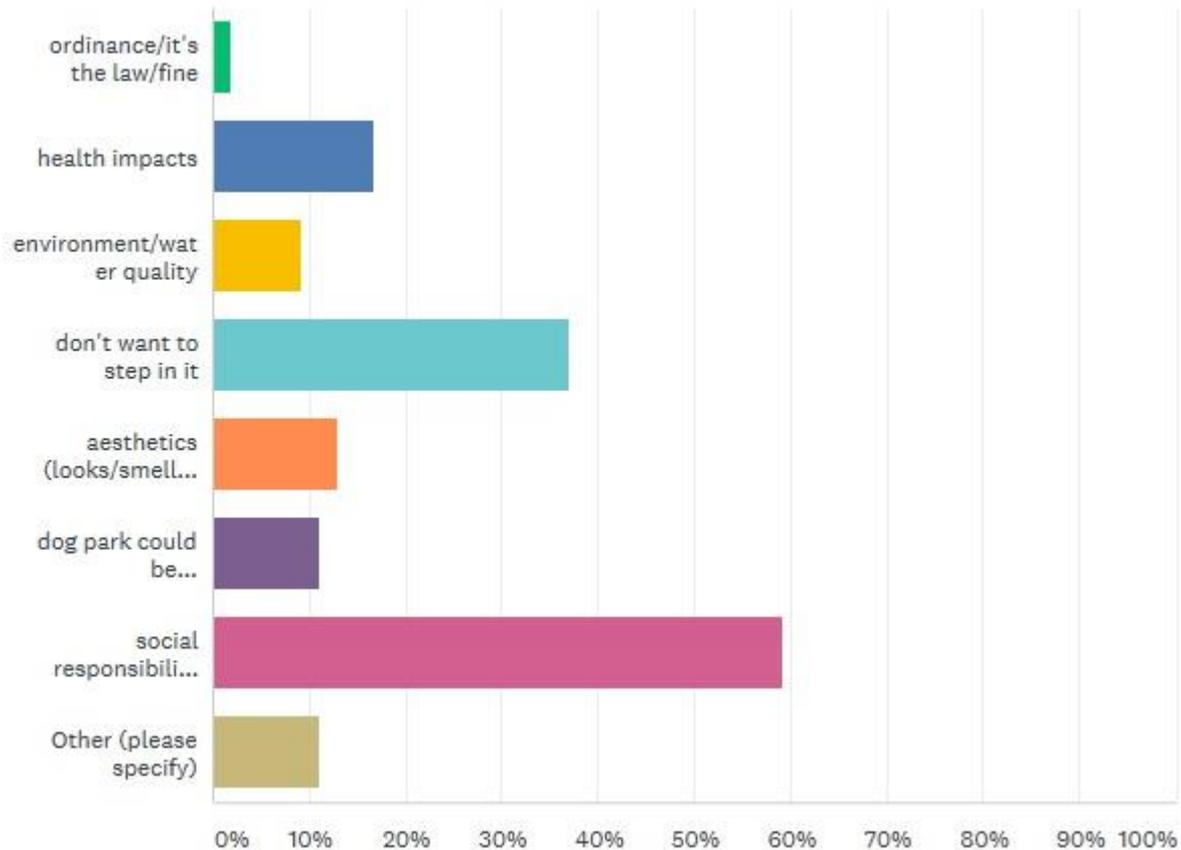
Answered: 54 Skipped: 0



Education Event- Survey Results

○ Q3) Why do you scoop?

Answered: 54 Skipped: 0



Final Results and Considerations

- Most pet owners pick up pet waste, when they see it happen.
- Dog park patrons take pride in their parks and are willing to help keep it clean.
- Future programs and considerations include-
 - Dog park clean up days
 - Social media campaign and signage using the "If you don't see it, you can't scoop it" messages



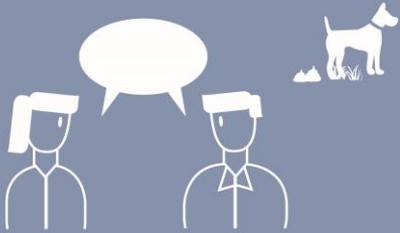
Special Thanks

- Opportunity NOW interns Eric Licon and Nideya Morris for the help with the survey and education events.
- Metro Parks for their coordination and answering all of our park maintenance and dog poo questions.
- My father for sitting with me on a Saturday morning at a dog park and pointing out whenever a dog was pooping.



Questions?

**DOGS DON'T
WAIT FOR YOU
TO FINISH YOUR
CONVERSATION**



*If you don't see it,
you can't scoop it.*



**DOG WASTE
KILLS
GRASS**



*Dog waste smothers your lawn,
killing grass and leaving brown
spots in your yard.*